Numb. 64.

THE OBSERVATOR.

A Propoſal to prevent the Sale of Sailors Tickets at an under Rate. Of the Q's and R's on the Navy Book. Of the Original uſe of thoſe Letters. Of the unreaſonableneſs and Cruelty of that Practice. Reaſons why the Sailors ſhould be better Treated for the future.

From Saturday November the 28th, to Wednesday December the 2d, 1702.

Country-m. MAſter *Obſervator*, I have been often thinking on your Diſcourſe, the laſt time we met, concerning the poor Sailors pay; ſhould I pay my Servants at that rate, I ſhould get none to Till my Ground; certainly the Sailors are very Honeſt Fellows to ſerve their Countrey under ſuch great Diſadvantages: But is there no way to prevent this Evil Practiſe?

Obſ. None that I know of, unleſs the Parliament will provide a Remedy. I have formerly propoſed, for prevention of this Evil, That all Tickets be Numbred and Indented, and paſs in all Payments, as *Chequer Bills*, having the ſame Intereſt, and the Tickets to be Sunk as Money ariſes from the Funds appropriated for the uſe of the Navy. The Intereſt payable upon theſe Tickets would not in the leaſt be a Charge to the Nation, for by this means there would be no occaſion of Borrowing Clauſes in our Money Bills, for notwithſtanding in the late Reign, there were vaſt Sums of Money taken up on heavy Intereſt for the Service of the Navy; yet the Sailors were ſtill ill-paid, and forc'd to ſell their Tickets at an unreaſonable Diſcount. Now if their Tickets were to paſs as ſpecie, with a growing Intereſt, the *Slop-ſellers*, and others with whom they deal, would take them as Money, and ſo the Sailors would be ſure of their Wages.

The ſame thing might be done in every Branch of the Navy, the Warrants of the Victualing and Navy Office for goods boughr, or for Service perform'd in Freights, or otherwiſe, might paſs as Specie with Intereſt. This would be equivalant to ready Money in the Victualing, for thoſe Bills having the Sanction of Parliament, would paſs currant at *Smithfield* for Oxen, at *Finchly* and *Rumford* for Hogs, and among the Brewers, Bakers, and Coopers in Town: A Circulation of theſe Bills and Warrants would ſave an Immenſe Sum in the Victualling, where the Managers in the late Reign generally gave 20 or 30 *per Cent.* above the Market price, for all Species of Proviſion, ſo that none knew how to deal with that Office; for notwithſtanding the Exceſſive Rates, they had for their Commodities, that Office always paying out of Courſe, their Time of Payment was ſo long, that generally they loſt Money by Dealing with the Office. Such as had got the Knack of Trading with Publick Offices, made their Pennyworths of the Trade, for theſe, by applying a parcel of Guineas in a proper Place, would have their Warrants pay'd the next day after their Signing, when other Warrants Signed the ſame Day, were not pay'd in two or three Years after, becauſe the Owners of them were not led into the Myſtery of Prompt Payment. This Grievance is in a great manner Redreſſed, ſince Sir *Thomas Littleton* has been Pay-Maſter of the Navy; for he having brought the Payments of the Victualling to *Broad-Street*, all Victualling Warrants are faithfully Pay'd in Courſe, for which good piece of Service he highly deſerves the Poſt he Enjoys, and long may he continue in it for the good of our Country. For tho' the Payments may be ſlow in the Pay-Office, according as Money Ebbs and Flows in the Exchequer; yet 'tis a great Advantage to the Traders, that they know their Warrants will be Pay'd as their Numbers ſhall riſe on the Liſt, when as before the Victuallers obſerving no Courſe in Payment, no Man knew how to bid Money for a Victualling Warrant, becauſe the time of Payment was ſo uncertain; but now the Buyers and Sellers are eas'd in that Reſpect.

Country-m. Truly, Sir, What you Propoſed was very Reaſonable, and I wonder it was not comply'd with at that time. I beg you to give me a little more Light into the Grievances of the Navy, which is the chief Security of our Country. It is an unpleaſant Pleaſure to know by what Means and Methods we are Ruined: However, 'tis ſatisfaction to Relations to know of what Diſtemper their Kindred Dy'd. If we of this Age neglect, or overlook the Cure of the Epidemical Diſtempers of the Navy; however let us tell our Children, by what Methods our Maritime Strength was weakened; they perhaps will be more Vertuous and leſs Self-Intereſted than our ſelves; and may find out Medicines Reſtorative to the Health of the Navy. A Gentleman in that Company was much complaining of the Injuries done the Sailors, by putting of *Q*'s and *R*'s upon their Names in the Navy Books.

Obſ. That is another great Grievance indeed. To give you a true Light into this Affair, you muſt underſtand that by the Letter *Q.* is mean't *Query*. As for Example, a Sailor being ſet a Shore ſick, or turned over from one Ship to another, or ſent a Shore with the Long-Boat about the Ships Buſineſs, or by any other means, ſo that he is not preſent to Anſwer to his Name at the Muſter, the Clerk of the *Check*, or ſome other Officer, returns a *Q* upon his Name, where it remains an Obſtacle to the Payment of his Wages, till ſuch time as he has reſolved this *Query*; the Sailor perhaps, before the Ship on which he was made Querried, comes on call has been turned over to 2 or 3 other Ships, & is gone to the *Eaſt* or *Weſt-Indies*; before he went away, he Sold his Tickets to fit him out for his Voyage; the People he Sold theſe

Tickets

Tickets to, come to the Pay Table, with full power to receive his Pay, where they meet with a *Q.* inſtead of Money; and this is the meaning of that oppreſſive Letter, which was never brought into the Navy Books, till about the Year 90.

The Letter *R*, tho' it ſtands laſt in the Alphabet, yet it is of a much Antienter Date than the *Q*, and may properly be called, an *Elder Brother of Oppreſſion*; as having Tyrannized over the Sailors for ſome preceding Reigns. The meaning of it is *Run, viz.* when they have been abſent from their Ships as aforeſaid, then are they made *Run* upon the Books; but this *R* is a confounded Letter, 'tis Permament and Immoveable; all the Capſtals and Windlaſſes on Board a Firſt-Rate Man of War, cannot move it out of it's place. And thus have I *Engliſhed* to you the Hierogliphick Language of the Admiralty.

Country m. Maſter *Obſervator*; I hope you're miſtaken, as to matter of Fact, for otherwiſe thia is the moſt Inhumane, Barbarous, and Unjuſt Uſage that can be; for I gather from your Diſcourſe, that the Sailors being made *Queried* or *Run*, after their Tickets have been made out, thoſe Tickets have been denied payment; this is Barbarous, and ought not to be ſuffered in a Chriſtian Country. Pray, Sir, recollect your Memory, I hope you're miſtaken.

Obſ. Not in the leaſt, 'tis all matter of Fact. If a Sailor have ſerv'd in 6 Ships ſucceſſively, and be made *run* in the 7th, all the Tickets he had made out in the former 6 Ships have been made forfeit. Now to demonſtrate the Injuſtice of this Practice, I muſt tell you a little of the nature of thoſe Tickets. Before we had Courtiers employ'd in Naval Affairs, every Ship at her return from a Voyage was paid off at the Port ſhe arrived at, as ſoon as ſhe came in, I ſpeak now of things out of Memory, but as ſoon as our Courts began to Flouriſh, and the Courtiers grew ſo Numerous that they joſtled one another for Elbow Room, and the Moneys appointed for the Civil Liſts was not able to maintain half of 'em, then they made Detachments of them into the Navy as Officers; ſo that the Navy, which before was managed by Perſons well skill'd in Naval Affairs, was afterwards under the Management of Men brought in by Intereſt, and who knew nothing of the Buſineſs, but ſerv'd there only to ſave a Penſion at Court, or to gain a Vote in the Houſe of Commons; and by this means the ready Money of the Navy was turned into Tickets, tho' I muſt needs ſay 'till within theſe few Reigns, the Sailors Tickets were eſteem'd as the Kings Bonds, and were paid at Sight; any Trades-man would take them as Specie, and the Sailors never wanted the Money they had earned: But the making of theſe Tickets forfeited after this manner, is the moſt unreaſonable thing in the World. For how does the Sailors bad Service in the 7th Ship, affect his good Service in the former ſix Ships? If the Sailor had been paid as he ought to have been in the ſix Ships, he could not have loſt his Money by his Delinquency in the 7th: So that it ſeems he loſt his Money becauſe the Government had it not at that time to pay him, which was none of his fault: How a Ticket can be Forfeited I am ſure no Law does determine, nor is it conſiſtent with common Juſtice and Right that any Officers ſhould act by a Diſcretiona Power; this is a Power which never yet was allowed the Kings of *England*, and therefore must eſteem this a Uſurpation in the Navy Officers; for is it not puniſhment enough for a Sailor to forfeit his pay on board that Ship whe in he became a Delinquent, without a Reſpect to his Tickets made out in form Ships? But the Caſe is much more, if we co ſider that many of theſe Sailors thus Ruin by *Q*'s and *R*'s, are ſuch as have loſt Limb and have been Wounded in the Servic and have received ſmart Money for the ſame that they are ſuch as have been Diſcharged o of Hoſpitals, and Hoſpital Ships, and have bee ſent aſhoar as incureable; if this Grievance b not worthy Redreſs, I don't know what t think of it.

Country-m; I proteſt, Sir, my Hair ſtands an end to hear you relate theſe matters! Was the Parliament ever acquainted with this Grievance?

Obſ. Yes, Sir, ſeveral times; Mr. *Byrne* repreſented this Affair to two Parliaments ſucceſſively, and was a great deal of Money out of Pocket in Proſecuting the Complaint, and the Miniſters, Church-Wardens, and other Pariſh-Officers, with the principal Inhabitants of the Pariſhes by the Water-ſide, Petitioned the Houſe on this Account, ſetting forth that vaſt numbers of the Sailors Wives and Children were become burthenſome to their Pariſhes, by reaſon of their Husbands being kept out of their pay; I have been told that ſome of thoſe Pariſhes have Augmented their Poor's Books to two or three thouſand pounds *per Annum*; but all Mr. *Bryne*, or the other Petitioners could do, did not get the leaſt Relief for theſe miſerable Creatures.

Country-m. But, Pray, Sir, who had theſe Mens Money? Without doubt the Nation Pay'd it.

Obſ. I could Anſwer you that Queſtion, was it Convenient. We are now in the Infancy of a Reign: The Crown of *England* is on the Head of a Princeſs, from whom we may expect the greateſt Juſtice. Her Sailors at *Vigo*, have given her Majeſty an Earneſt of their Affection and Bravery, which I make no Queſtion will Convince Her Majeſty, that they deſerve better Treatment than what they have met with in former Reigns. I deſire no more for the good of the poor Sailors of *England*, than that Her Majeſty, or His Royal Highneſs, were acquainted with their Circumſtances, and then they would have no Reaſon to Deſpair of Relief.

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